



Springtime is Play Outside Time!

**Suggestions for items to
purchase in support of an
outdoor learning environment
quality enhancement strategy**

Materials for all ages:

- Plants, seeds and planting materials to create a:
 - Butterfly garden
 - Sensory or “touch” garden
 - Herb garden
 - Vegetable garden
- Planters & seeds for window gardens
- Outdoor storage bins
- Sand & water tables with cups, spoons, trucks & other toys
- Benches for quiet outdoor spaces
- Picnic tables & picnic blankets
- Portable arbors
- Materials for raised garden beds that can be accessible for all children
- Shade structures
- Bird feeders & houses
- Wind chimes & garden gazing balls
- First Aid kits
- Compost bins & rain barrels
- Hoses & sprinklers for watering & water play
- Puppet theatre & puppets
- CD players for outdoor music
- Storybooks with a nature theme
- Informational books about the outdoors

Materials for preschoolers:

- Child sized gardening tools (rakes, hand trowels, gardening gloves, watering cans, etc.)
- Mosaic stepping stone kits
- Materials to build a platform or stage for outdoor performances
- Magnifying glasses & collecting tubs
- Binoculars
- Wheelbarrows, trikes & wagons
- Rain gear (rain boots, parkas, umbrellas)
- Outdoor center materials (musical instruments, blocks, art easels & materials, dramatic play materials)
- Balls, scarves, jump ropes, hula hoops, etc.
- Outdoor weather center items (thermometers, weather vanes, rain gauge)
- Bird, plant & tree identification books
- Talk tubes
- Play houses
- Balance beams or other items used to practice balance
- Parachutes for parachute play

Materials for infants & toddlers:

- Short tunnels and peek a boo places
- Push toys, balls, etc.
- Bucket swings
- Mats & blankets for tummy time
- Safe climbing equipment
- Outdoor center materials (blocks, cars/trucks, soft toys, puzzles, sorters & stackers)

Additional Resources

Master Gardeners

As planting time draws near, you may want to consider collaborating with a Master Gardener program in your community. These programs are available across the state through county Cooperative Extension offices. As part of their training program, Master Gardeners are required to participate in volunteer service projects, and may be interested in working on projects that seek to improve outdoor spaces for young children. For more information on Master Gardeners, go to: www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/masgar/ or call your local Cooperative Extension agent. Find the number for your local Cooperative Extension by visiting www.ces.ncsu.edu.

Books for professionals:

Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale (POEMS), Karen DeBord, Linda L. Hestenes, Robin C. Moore, Nilda G. Cosco, & Janet R. McGinnis (Kaplan, 2005)

Natural Playscapes, Rusty Keeler, (Child Care Exchange, 2008)

Discovering Nature with Young Children, Ingrid Chalufour, Karen Worth, (NAEYC, 2003)

Outdoor Play Everyday: Innovative Play Concepts for Early Childhood, Karyn Wellhousen, (Delmar Learning, 2001)

Learning Outdoors Improving the Quality of Young Children's Play Outdoors, Helen Bilton (David Fulton Publishers, 2005)

Natural Learning- Creating Environments for Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching, Robin C. Moore and Herb H. Wong (MIG Communications, 1997)

Websites:

- NC Outdoor Learning Environments Alliance: <http://www.osr.nc.gov/ole>
- Natural Learning Initiative, NCSU: www.naturalearning.org
- Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale (POEMS) <http://poemsnc.org/>
- NC Botanical Garden: www.ncbg.unc.edu
- Gardening with Kids store: <http://kidsgardeningstore.com/>
- Children's Landscape - Norway <http://www.barnas-landskap.org>
- ADHD Research at the University of Illinois: www.lhhl.uiuc.edu
- Evergreen Learning Grounds: <http://www.evergreen.ca/en/lg/lg.html>
- Planet Earth Playscapes: <http://www.planetearthplayscapes.com>